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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - GWOT - 9/11  
Middle East - Attack in Damascus - Lebanon - Hamas Franco-American  
Relations: Interior Minister Sarkozy Meets With President Bush  
PARIS - Wednesday, September 13, 2006

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

GWOT - 9/11  
Middle East - Attack in Damascus - Lebanon - Hamas  
Franco-American Relations: Interior Minister Sarkozy Meets With  
President Bush

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

Domestic stories dominate front pages, except for Le Monde which  
headlines: "Hamas and Fatah Form Government of National Unity" and  
adds: "the agreement would make it possible for international aid  
to resume." Le Figaro headlines below the fold: "Attack Against  
U.S. Embassy in Damascus." The report indicates that no one had  
claimed responsibility for the attack and that it took place "just  
when relations between Washington and Syria were at their lowest."

Secretary Rice's expressions of gratitude to the Syrian security

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forces is noted, as well as the Syrian embassy's accusations in Washington that the U.S. "is encouraging extremism and terrorism in the Middle East." Liberation states on its front page: "America Targeted in Damascus." One inside report wonders whether Syria "might not be behind the attack." (See Part C)

Le Figaro interviews Kuwait's PM who is on a visit to Paris and who indicated he was "surprised by the attack in Damascus," but asserted "he had full confidence in Syria's security forces." Georges Malbrunot indicates in his report that "Kuwait's alliance with the U.S. leaves it particularly open to terrorist threats."

Le Figaro carries the French version of a Project Syndicate column by Ted Garanson, Research Director at the Sirius Beta Corp, entitled "Against Al-Qaida's 'Business Model' Traditional War Is Ineffective." This is the second installment of a post-9/11 series.

Le Parisien devotes a full page to 9/11, and interviews philosopher Bernard-Henri Levy: "We have entered a new political age, where democracies must battle a new adversary in a new form of war... We all want to reconcile East and West, the question is how? A real reconciliation means not giving up our principles... and rejecting blackmail... And while I have repeatedly said since 9/11 that Muslims are my brothers, I have also said that not those who preach Islamism and hate... We must combat them and help secular democracies. In Iran we must develop our discussions with civil society... America is fighting terrorism, but badly. The war in Iraq is a tragic mistake, an absolute strategic error. Two mistakes are being made: in Europe, believing one can appease the enemy with words; in the U.S., applying old war methods to a new situation."

Other international stories include France's mission in Lebanon in UNIFIL. Liberation's editorial is entitled "Explosive" and underscores the "concerns" of the contingent. (See Part C) TF1 commented it was "the first time France's Leclerc tanks were used for a UN mission and it is the pride of the French contingent." The French Ambassador in Beirut, interviewed on TF1 noted that "it is a sign of the strong involvement of our country." A FR2 journalist said that "France may not have the largest contingent in UNIFIL but these tanks are a major asset for the international force."

President Musharraf's visit to Brussels and his position on fighting terrorism, and Interior Minister Sarkozy's visit to the U.S., including his meeting with President Bush make up the rest off today's international stories. Liberation contends that as the UMP candidate for the presidential elections, "Sarkozy's visit and meeting with the U.S. President indicate a mixing of the genres." For Le Parisien, Sarkozy's meeting with President Bush is his "American Dream" come true. (See Part C)

French television reported widely on President Bush's speech, particularly on France 3, with senior correspondent Christian Malar saying: "President Bush's foreign policy is a failure, in Afghanistan, in Iraq and in all of the countries where the U.S. has intervened." He added that "there is nothing to be optimistic about... President Bush is in a bad position... If the Republicans lose, President Bush will be a 'lame duck president' for two years and he will have to change his foreign policy."

Le Figaro carries a column by economic writer Jean-Pierre Robin on reforms for the WTO and the IMF. According to Robin, "globalization is going through a dangerous period." Robin contends that the reforms being considered are more than just technical, and they are fundamental... Robin notes China's "conquest of Africa based on a credit system which goes against the code of good conduct." He concludes: "The stalled WTO talks are leading to a plethora of inextricable bilateral agreements. Similarly, failure of the IMF would sound the death knell for multilateralism in the financial sector."

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

GWOT - 9/11

"A World Less Secure"

The front page editorial in regional La Provence (09/12): "Five

years after these murderous and spectacular attacks and in spite of an international mobilization against Islamic terrorism, the world has become less secure... After the fall of the Soviet Union and the end of the unjust balance of the 'Cold War,' the world hoped to create a more peaceful and equitable way of functioning. Alas, it fell into an imbalance of terror, fed by the tensions between rich and poor, excited by Islamic fanaticism and exacerbated by the arrogance of the United States... It is more than ever necessary to remove the terrorist cloud that is Al-Qaida and, above all, render illegitimate for Muslims their so-called 'holy war.' But the way taken by George Bush is a dangerous impasse in which the camp of liberty and modernity risk to lose its values: in other words, to lose everything."

#### Middle East - Attack in Damascus - Lebanon - Hamas

##### "Foiled Anti-American Attack in Damascus"

Pierre Prier in right-of-center Le Figaro (09/13): "Who is really behind this and other similar attacks in Damascus? Despite the possibility raised by Syria that the Islamic group 'Jound el-Sham' is responsible, experts say that Syria has not been suffering politically from these attacks... and has used them to play the 'victim.' These attacks, just when the U.S. is accusing Syria of aiding Iraq's Jihaddists, gives the regime the appearance of helping the West in ' its war against terrorism.' Secretary Rice's thanks are a small victory for Damascus... But yesterday's attack is sure to ignite the Syrian population which is already furious against the U.S. for the war in Lebanon."

##### "Syria, Victim or Manipulator"

Jean-Pierre Perrin in left-of-center Liberation (09/13): "Like all attacks perpetrated in Syria, this is an ambiguous one. Because Syria's secret service is able to infiltrate terrorist cells and to manipulate them, it is always difficult to identify the perpetrators and their motives... Because all assailants have been gunned down, Damascus will be able to paint whatever picture it wants... Just when relations between Washington and Damascus are at their lowest, it is entirely conceivable to imagine Damascus wanted to prove that Syria can also be the victim of Islamic destabilization... Some suggest Syria's secret service is behind the attack, but the motive remains unclear... Possibly the intent was to limit Washington's pressure on the Syrian capital... And while Iran was hoping the war between Hezbollah and Israel would distract the international community, Damascus had the same hopes because of the investigation into Hariri's assassination..."

##### "Explosive"

Pierre Haski in left-of-center Liberation (09/13): "An unfortunate coincidence marked the arrival of the French Leclerc tanks on Lebanese soil: a strange attack on the U.S. Embassy in Damascus, reminding everyone that in this region, the enemy is not clearly identifiable and that traditional rules of war may not apply... The scenario was also darkened by Nasrallah's attacks on the Lebanese PM, accused of 'immorality' and 'inhumanity...' This is enough to prove that there is no basis for an agreement for disarming Hezbollah... Yet France relied on such an agreement when it agreed to send its soldiers to Lebanon... In an aside in Helsinki, President Chirac indicated he believed the fate of UNIFIL's mission would depend on Iran... This explosive context has boosted the stakes for the mission: diplomacy, more than the Leclerc tanks will determine whether the mission succeeds or fails."

##### "An Opportune Gesture"

Left-of-center Le Monde in its editorial (09/13): "The government for national unity formed by Hamas and Fatah is a way for the Palestinian Authority to get out of the impasse in which it finds itself. The aim is to prevent the Palestinian people from plunging further into the economic and humanitarian rut it is in since the freezing of aid from the international community, particularly the EU. The reconciliation of these enemy factions has no other objective. It is a way to present a more respectable face to the donors than that of a government dominated by Hamas... This agreement is a gesture that the international community, as well as Israel, must seize upon if Ehoud Olmert truly wants to renew discussions with Mahmoud Abbas as he has indicated."

Franco-American Relations: Interior Minister Sarkozy Meets With President Bush

#### "Sarkozy's Franco-American Summit"

Jacques Camus in regional La Republique du Centre (09/13):

"Yesterday, Interior Minister Sarkozy granted himself a 'mini Franco-American summit.' He was not mandated to expound on France's foreign policy. And when he said that he wanted to rebuild the relationship between France and the U.S., deploring 'too much incomprehension for lack of a dialogue' Sarkozy was trying to make history outside the limits of his mission. At the Elysee and the Quai there are those who are probably castigating themselves for giving Sarkozy too much leeway."

#### "Sarkozy Meets President Bush"

Judith Waintraub in right-of-center Le Figaro (09/13): "Sarkozy the 'American' is convinced that France can oppose the U.S. on certain issues. He proved this when he criticized the U.S. attitude towards the environment, but he also insisted that the 'friendship' linking both sides of the Atlantic has a long history and is 'here to stay.'"

The visit of the French presidential hopeful did not go unnoticed in Washington: the President of the UMP was surprised when George [W. Bush](#) in person walked into his meeting with Steve Hadley. The two had a most unexpected half-hour meeting."

#### "The Many Hats of Presidential Hopeful Sarkozy"

Laurent Mauriac in left-of-center Liberation (09/13): "Two Sarkozys went to Washington, the President of the UMP and the future presidential candidate... The point of his meeting with President Bush was especially to prove that Sarkozy has the required international stature, something he demonstrated when he spoke about Iraq, the crisis with Iran and the transatlantic relationship."

#### "Sarkozy's American Dream"

Ludovic Vigogne in right-of-center Le Parisien (09/13): "President Bush is accustomed to meeting only with his counterparts. Hence his meeting with Interior Minister Sarkozy is of great importance to the French Minister, considering that his number one objective during his U.S. visit was to paint himself as a potential presidential candidate." STAPLETON